Cutting of Surru Trees in Vasai

2405. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item, appearing in Sagar, a Marathi Daily dated 15th October, 2002 about mass cutting of Surru trees along the Coastal area of Vasai, Maharashtra;

(b) if so, what action Government have taken against the people, who have deserted the Coastal area and affected the environment; and

(c) whether it is a fact that these trees have been sold to one shipping company?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) Thane Social Forestry Division under Konkan Social Forestry Circle, Thane has been raising Surru plantations on the coastal areas in Vasai Tehsil of Thane district. These plantation are raised either on community land or on gram panchayat lands. After 3 years, the plantations are handed over to the concerned gram panchayat for further maintenance & protection. Inquiry with sarpanch of Arnala Village, where miximum extent of Surru plantations have been raised reveals that no incidence of mass cutting of Surru trees along the coastal areas in Arnala Village of Vasai Tehsil has taken place in the current year 2002. However, sporadic incidents of cutting of Surru trees by villagers for domestic use do take place.

Endangered Hoolock Gibbon in Assam

2406. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased of state:

(a) whether it is a fact that upper Assam's rare Hoolock Gibbon are at the verge of extinction, because of poaching by the people across the border;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to protect the Hoolock Gibbon?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Hoolock gibbon is in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and hence has been provided highest degree of protection under law. Further, the steps taken for conservation of wildlife, including Hoolock gibbon, in the country include:

1. Crucial habitats of various species of wild animals and birds have been notified as National Parks and Sanctuaries.

2. Financial assistance is provided to State Governments for effective management of National Parks and Sanctuaries. There is provision of earmarked funds for North-eastern States where Hoolock gibbon is found.

3. Regular patrolling of the area is done to control poaching and illegal trade in wild animals and their products. Cooperation of other enforcement agencies and international organisations is also taken in this regard.

4. Management of the wildlife habitats is done on scientific lines for betterment of wildlife.

5. Scientific research for monitoring population status of various species and evolving strategies for *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation of various species.

6. Creation of awareness about the importance of Wildlife conservation.

7. National Wildlife Action Plan, 2002-16 and Wildlife Conservation Strategy 2002 have been adopted in January 2002.

Eco-Strips Along Irrigation Canal in Karnataka

2407. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Karnataka Government had sent any project to develop eco-strips along its 1.2 lakh km. irrigation canal network;

(b) if so, what is the estimated cost of the above project;

(c) whether Government have given approval to the above project; and